

VITAL STATISTICS

Complete and accurate vital statistics are fundamental to effective public health work. Without reliable statistics of deaths the health officer cannot tell what diseases are seriously attacking the citizens; while without prompt and complete birth registration he cannot compute the infant death rate or initiate the best type of baby-saving work.

The work for better vital statistics of the North Carolina State Board of Health has drawn National attention and has secured the State's acceptance in the Registration Area established by the United States Bureau of the Census. With regard to Raleigh, we are glad to say that during the course of our investigation we found no evidence that deaths occurring within the city limits are escaping registration. While a few minor discrepancies have existed, as in the registration of stillbirths, we feel that the local registration of deaths may be taken as complete. The quality of registration has improved in recent years, and is still improving. The effort should be continued to the end that the information appearing on all certificates be as full, clear, and revealing as possible.

With regard to the registration of births, we would state that the situation in Raleigh is more than usually satisfactory. The recent canvass resulted in the discovery of only eight unregistered births, and, while there is doubtless some further error, the corrected rates indicate birth registration to be more than 90 per cent complete. The corrected birth rate for the city is 27.1 per thousand population; the white rate being 25.1 and the colored 31.0. It is probable that the checking of birth reports throughout the year, instead of after the completion of the year, as was the case in the recent canvass, would result in still more complete registration.

Taking all the deaths registered in 1917, and using the population estimate of the United States Bureau of the Census, the city's crude death rate was 28.4 per 1,000 population. On the same basis the rate has varied from 24.9 to 30.4, and has averaged 27.8 during the last five years. These are high figures; they are partly due to the Negro population and partly to the presence of nonresidents. If Negroes be excluded, the city's rate for the five-year period is 23.0, as against the Negro rate of 36.2. Taking the matter from another standpoint, if deaths of nonresidents be excluded, the general death rate for 1917 is 20.9, that for whites 17.0, that for Negroes being 27.9. These figures, which are based on a very favorable criterion as to nonresidence, are still high. The excessive figure among Negroes is a familiar phenomenon, and reflects the conditions under which they live.

The above rates are based on the Census estimates of population, this being the standard practice. If the local estimate of 24,000 population be used, somewhat more favorable rates will, of course, be obtained. This figure includes, however, all persons in institutions and schools, so that exclusion of deaths among such persons would not be a fair